

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

December 17, 1972

Dear Mr. President:

I have again asked General Haig to visit you in Saigon. He will inform you of my final considered personal judgment of the state of the ceasefire negotiations and of the prospects we now face.

Over the last two months -- through my personal letters, through my extensive personal discussions with your emissary, through communications via Dr. Kissinger, General Haig, and Ambassador Bunker, and through daily consultations in Paris -- I have kept you scrupulously informed of the progress of the negotiations. I have sought to convey to you my best judgment of what is in our mutual interest. I have given you every opportunity to join with me in bringing peace with honor to the people of South Vietnam.

General Haig's mission now represents my final effort to point out to you the necessity for joint action and to convey my irrevocable intention to proceed, preferably with your cooperation but, if necessary, alone.

Recent events do not alter my conclusion. Although our negotiations with Hanoi have encountered certain obstacles, I want you to have no misunderstanding with regard to three basic issues: First we may still be on the verge of reaching an acceptable agreement at any time. Second, Hanoi's current stalling is prompted to a great degree by their desire to exploit the public dissension between us. As Hanoi obviously realizes, this works to your grave

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disadvantage. Third, as I have informed Hanoi, if they meet our minimum remaining requirements, I have every intention of proceeding rapidly to a settlement.

You are also aware of certain military actions which will have been initiated prior to General Haig's arrival. As he will explain to you, these actions are meant to convey to the enemy my determination to bring the conflict to a rapid end -- as well as to show what I am prepared to do in case of violation of the agreement. I do not want you to be left, under any circumstances, with the mistaken impression that these actions signal a willingness or intent to continue U.S. military involvement if Hanoi meets the requirements for a settlement which I have set.

If the present lack of collaboration between us continues, and if you decide not to join us in proceeding now to a settlement, it can only result in a fundamental change in the character of our relationship. I am convinced that your refusal to join us would be an invitation to disaster -- to the loss of all that we together have fought for over the past decade. It would be inexcusable above all because we will have lost a just and honorable alternative.

I have asked General Haig to obtain your answer to this absolutely final offer on my part for us to work together in seeking a settlement along the lines I have approved or to go our separate ways. Let me emphasize in conclusion that General Haig is not coming to Saigon for the purpose of negotiating with you. The time has come for us to present a united front in negotiating with our enemies, and you must decide now whether you desire to continue to work together or whether you want me to seek a settlement with the enemy which serves U.S. interests alone.

Sincerely,



His Excellency
Nguyen Van Thieu
President of the Republic of Vietnam
Saigon